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ABSTRACT

Introduced in Indonesia in 1977, the Learning Kejar Packet A (LKPA) is an educational program for low-literate people and primary school dropouts. The 20-year-old program is still flourishing, but are its ideas still valid and what are the secrets of its longevity? The first reason probably lies in the contents and design of the learning materials called Packet A. The contents---knowledge, skills, and attitude--are closely linked to real-life situations. Motivating factors are also built in. The second reason might be found in the word "kejar," which means literally "to catch up." Kejar is also two acronyms--bekerja (ke) meaning to work and belajar (jar) meaning to learn and kelompok (ke) belajar (jar) meaning learning group. These three meanings have become the essential characteristics of LKPA. The third reason might lie in LKPA's delivery system. After a preliteracy program, a learning group is formed. The fourth reason is probably its flexibility, such as motivating members of the armed forces to participate as tutors and facilitators and provision of supplementary learning materials. The fifth and probably most important reason for LKPA'a longevity is the Indonesian gotong-gotong or mutual assistance social system. LKPA is still flourishing because it is in tune with the idea of Education for All and All for Education and is integrated with an employment-oriented learning program. (YLB)

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Are the Ideas of Learning Kejar Packet A of Indonesia Still Valid?

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ARE THE IDEAS OF LEARNING KEJAR PAKET A OF INDONESIA STILL VALID?

by

Washington P. Napitupulu[e]

I.

First of all, let me thank the International Literacy Institute, University of Pennsylvania for inviting me to this important Forum, and also for bearing the costs of my participation.

After thinking through and thoroughly on the theme of our Forum, i.e. *"Innovation and Professionalization in Adult Literacy: A Focus on Changing Market Economies."* I directly noticed that this Forum is going to put a heavy emphasis on an adult as *homo economicus* while in reality an adult is more than that. After studying the theme in a reactive fashion, I thought that I probably better not to participate at all.

But, then I thought probably the theme is well-thought of, because an adult is supposed to be responsible to earn a living both for himself or herself, but also for his or her offsprings, thus an adult literacy program should clearly be linked to the world of work. In this connection, I suddenly remember the grand strategy cum policy in education proposed by His Excellency, the Minister of Education and Culture, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Wardiman Djojonegoro since 1993, i.e. *link-and-match* between the world of education and the world of work. An adult literacy program is, indeed, an educational program, therefore it should be linked to the world of work. After all, when the stomach is empty who cares about the three R's, or another way of expressing it, 'A hungry person gets angry easily, and will not be able to think and talk about peace'.

So, here I am, among all of you, the participants to the Asia Literacy Regional Forum, have chosen a topic for our discussion, "Are the Ideas of Learning Kejar Packet A of Indonesia Still Valid?

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II.

The Learning Kejar Packet A (LKPA) is an educational program for 'the illiterates and the primary school drop-outs', introduced in Indonesia since 1977, thus twenty years ago, but until now the program is still flourishing. The question to be asked is then, "Are the ideas of LKPA still valid?" Why? What are the 'secrets' of its longevity?

This paper is meant **to analyze some of the reasons** for the purpose of enrichment and exchange of ideas between us in this Forum.

The **first** reason lies probably in the contents of the learning materials called Packet A and in the way they are designed. The Packet A consists of a series of basic learning materials on *all* aspect of life (Packet A-1 to A-100) needed by 'the illiterates and the primary school drop-outs' enabling them to become well-informed citizens and to practice citizenship's responsibility. Since the people served, are the illiterates and the primary school drop-outs, the Indonesian illiteracy eradication program has been since the beginning perceived and conceived *as 'pre-literacy, literacy and post-literacy programs'* and as one continuous process. Thus, all the efforts to motivate learners (the illiterates and the drop-outs) that is before introducing ABC are, indeed, very significant, and is called *pre-literacy* program. After they are motivated, then learning Packet A-1 is being introduced until they master up to A-20; this is called *literacy* program. Then, all the materials starting with A-21 up to A-100 may be called *post-literacy* program.

The 100 booklets of Packet A have been structured into 22 levels of difficulties, and one may visualize them as a letter T with two roofs. The leg of letter 'I' is Packet A-1 to A-20 (20 levels of difficulties), Paket A-21 to A-60 is the first roof and Packet A-61 to A-100 is the second roof (two levels of difficulties).

The contents--knowledge, skills and attitude--are also very closely linked to real-life situation which make them more interesting to the learners, for instance, reading, writing and arithmetic are integrated starting with Packet A-1, because in real-life situation nobody separates them. In addition, the materials are written in the form of modules (self-instructional) to facilitate self-learning process.

Built-in the Packet A learning materials there are motivating factors, such as songs to be studied, to avoid the learners getting bored. Starting with Packet A-3, 98 national songs; and starting with Packet A-47, 54 provincial/local songs--two songs per province; Indonesia consists of 27 provinces, all 152 songs are integral parts of Packet A booklets. The reason for putting national songs first is to inculcate the sense of unity of Indonesia (one of the five cardinal values of *Pancasila* -- the third -- that guide the life of the nation; the first is belief in God Almighty, the second, humanitarianism, the fourth, democracy, and the fifth, social justice for all Indonesians), because Indonesia consists of more than 17,000 islands with more

than 300 languages and different traditional customs, and five religions -- Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Hinduism and Buddhism --, hence the sentence in the coat-of-arms of the Republic of Indonesia, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity).

Not only knowledge and attitude, but the skills introduced in Packet A are to be practiced also, like dress-making, vegetable growing, fish-breeding, chicken-raising, etc. are all there not just to know and understand but to be utilized and practiced for quality of life improvement.

The **second** reason might be found in the word *kejar*. The word kejar is an Indonesian word which literally means 'to catch up'. The idea behind this is that 'an illiterate or a primary school drop-out' has been left behind, both by the scarcity of educational facilities, but also because the societal structure and values. In Asia, particularly, 'the aural culture' is still more prevalent than 'the written culture', one of the reasons why the Asians can easily enter into 'the talking activities trap', or become members of *nato* (nato here has nothing to do with the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization -- NATO--, it simply means -- an acronym -- no action talk only).

But, the word kejar in the LKPA is not only used in its literal meaning, it is also acronyms twice, first, be**k**erja (to work) and bela**jar** (to learn), and secondly, **k**elompok bela**jar** (learning group). Those three meanings have become the essential characteristics of LKPA. Not only the learners have to catch up with what they are lagging behind, but also that they should form a learning group and learn together, in addition, the learners should earn a living (productive work) while utilizing their leisure time to learn. But also in the sense proposed by John Dewey, 'learning-by-doing'.

The **third** reason might lie in the delivery system used by LKPA. Ever since LKPA launched in 1977, Indonesia has evaded from training special literacy teachers, because the out-of-school education channel should not compete with the in-school educational channel in terms of getting adequate teachers, but should try to complement and supplement it. Indonesia also did not try to formalize the program by setting up time for learning during the busy schedule of work of the people. Instead, as has been said, that they should learn utilizing leisure effectively.

Most of the learners are farmers and small traders, and it is their custom that when they come home after work before sunset, and after dinner they usually get out of the house to chat with neighbours (aural culture). This situation, after a pre-literacy program, was gradually changed by asking them to form a learning group, and after one to two hours learning Packet A, they may continue chatting. Thus, the LKPA program is tuned into their daily habits and situation, and they are not deprived of what they enjoy doing the most.

The **fourth** reasons is probably its openness to a new idea (flexibility), such as motivating the members of the armed forces to participate both as tutors as well as

facilitators of LKPA. This particular mobilization of the military for enhancing LKPA is *called Operasi Bhakti ABRI Manunggal Aksara* (OBAMA = literacy translated, Literacy United Service Operation of the Armed Forces). From 1,000,000 target last year, the operation has successfully reached 987,040 persons, almost 100%. Of course, there is a danger here that if one is too much target-oriented, the quality might suffer. But, this operation consists of three stages, namely 'eradication', 'cultivation', and 'perpetuation' (sustainable). The 987,040 persons are now at the 'cultivation' stage, and when this is over, with the help of about 10,000 community reading corners, the learners will enter the perpetuation stage.

The LKPA for the adults -- 100 Packet A booklets -- is now differentiated from LKPA for children age 6 to 12, i.e. LKPA equivalent to primary school, and due to the successful implementation of 6 years compulsory primary education (started on May 2, 1984), Indonesia is now moving to provide 9 years compulsory basic education, i.e. 6 years primary and 3 years lower secondary education (started on May 2, 1994). In order to be able to successfully implement the 9 years compulsory basic education, the out-of-school education channel provides learning kejar packet B (LKPB) equivalent to lower secondary school. In the future, of course, like other industrialized countries, Indonesia will introduce a 12 years compulsory education, and who knows that at that time, in the out-of-school education channel, there might be a need for learning kejar Packet C (LKPC) for the upper secondary education participants.

Another story that is worth mentioning here is the early childhood development which needs a serious attention following the findings of research in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotoric development of early childhood. The future adults depend very much on the education and nurturing of the present children, especially those below five years old. The World Declaration on Education for All also mentioned this particular point. The out-of-school education channel is now studying the situation of early childhood in Indonesia in order to introduce innovative and effective programs in the near future.

Another important aspect of flexibility of LKPA program is the provision of *supplementary learning materials* produced by the provincial/local offices of education and culture -- close to the idea of a local content of the curriculum --, such as posters, slides, learning games, and cassette tapes to reinforce the learning process. The follow-up programs are also making use of the mass media, such as newspapers, radio and television in order to develop surely a learning-teaching society.

The **fifth**, and probably the most important reason for the LKPA's longevity is the Indonesian *gotong-gotong* or mutual assistance social system which in our modern world is now popular, called synergy. As a traditional system, the villagers are used to help each others in all of their activities in the village, including in LKPA program. The spirit of volunteerism is, indeed, one of Indonesian-society's

core values. As a matter of fact, any Indonesian may fall into one of the following categories of volunteers, i.e.:

(a) part-time short-term volunteers,
(b) full-time short-term volunteers;
(c) part-time long-term volunteers; and
(d) full-time long-term volunteers;

In addition, our ancestors have left for us a very valuable proverb of *'saling asih, saling asuh, and saling asah'*, meaning, mutual love, mutual nurture, and mutual 'sharpen', to be used to guide us in daily life, including in the implementation of LKPA and other out-of-school educational programs.

The progress and success of any development programs and projects in Indonesia, especially in the rural areas, may clearly be explained by the existence of the voluntary spirit, the mutual assistance social system, and the proverb mentioned above.

All the tutors and facilitators of LKPA are volunteers, and they are recruited from the available educated villagers, including the village primary school teachers and religious leaders. These facilitate the learning program, because the learners know them and they do not feel ashamed to be known as an illiterate or a school drop-out. Many tutors and facilitators for LKPA program are part-time long-term volunteers. They enjoy helping the learners, probably also because while teaching them they are also learning something. This phenomenon is similar to all teaching-learning situations everywhere in the world. Thus, a mental-spiritual satisfaction is there for the tutors in the implementation of LKPA!

However, since the Indonesian economy is now better than before, a tutor is given a token of appreciation in the form of small cash, because as the economy improves people tend to change and move into the direction of 'materialism' and the LKPA does not want to lose the volunteer tutors and facilitators.

III.

Since by concepts and design, the LKPA is in tune with the idea of Education for All and All for Education, then the World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, 1990 has pushed the LKPA to stay, therefore still flourishing. Another positive push came from the E-9 High Population Developing Countries who held the Summit on Education for All in New Delhi in 1993, as a follow-up to the Jomtien Conference, i.e. China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Indonesia in the Asia-Pacific region, Egypt and Nigeria, in Africa region, and Brazil and Mexico in the Americas. The ministerial meetings to evaluate the results of work in the field of education for all are organized once in two years, in Jakarta-Denpasar, Indonesia in 1995, and next September 1997 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

In addition, consistent with the theme of our Forum and the contents of Packet A, the LKPA is also integrated with an employment-oriented learning program, which started when the World Bank lent Indonesia some funds which includes in the program, the idea of a 'learning fund'. The learning fund has been used to help the learners learn and implement an income-generating project in addition to learning Packet A. This additional aspect of LKPA is going to promote the growth of entrepreneurship and managerial skills enabling a group of learners to market the skills they possess in accordance with the changing needs of the community. This may be considered as an ample proof for the well-thought theme of our Forum, i.e. to focus on changing market economies.

The types of learners of income-generating employment-oriented program, including those not participating in the LKPA or LKPB, but all in the out-of-school-education channel may be categorized, as follows:

(a) learners who are in possession of certain skill, but unable to market it, or unable to find a suitable employment;

(b) learners who have certain skills and who have begun businesses on a very small scale; and

(c) learners who are unskilled and unemployed may enter this learning group where they learn the skills from the other members of the group in an apprenticeship fashion.

As a concluding remark, I would say that adult literacy programs in any one country must take into consideration the real-life situation of the people, including the socio-cultural values prevailing and directing their behaviour, and then relate them into the future events that are taking place now, such as the changing market economies, in order to design programs that are relevant to the new demands. In our region, the Asean Free Trade Area (AFTA) of 2003, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) of 2010 for the industrialized countries, and of 2020 for the developing economies. This *globalization process* will require an adult literacy program related to income-generating employment-oriented activities enabling the adults, for instance, to think proactively and to anticipate the future demands, such as to produce handicrafts for the foreign visitors and tourists, but also in developing other relevant attractive and demanded services.

Jakarta, 24 April 1997.